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ABSTRACT

The perception of locus of control among one hundred and seventy-seven grade 4, 5, and 6 pupils in a traditional school, and one hundred and eighty-five grade 4, 5, and 6 children in a community controlled school was investigated. The Children's Internal Vs. External Scale which measures general life situations, and the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale which measures only academically related situations were administered. The results indicate that the students in a community controlled school are more "internal" than pupils in a traditional school when asked questions about general life situations. No significant differences, however, were found between the two groups on perception of locus of control in academic situations. (Author)

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The Effects of Attending a Community Controlled School on Pupils' Perception of Locus of Control

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perception of locus of control among 177 fourth, fifth and sixth grade pupils in a Traditional School and 185 fourth, fifth and sixth grade pupils in a Community Controlled School. The CIE, Childrens Internal vs. External scale which measures general life situations and the IAR Intellectual Achievement Responsibility scale which measures only academically related situations were administered. The results indicate that pupils in a Community Controlled School are more Internal than pupils in a Traditional School when asked questions about general life situations. No significant differences, however, were found between the two groups on perception of locus of control in academic situations.

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The Effects of Attending a Community Controlled School on Pupils' Perception of Locus of Control[1]

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There are several definitions which have been assigned to the term community controlled school some of which equate decentralization and community control. The position taken in this paper is that community control is not synonomous with the term decentralization which refers to an administrative reorganization which reduces the size of present school districts. A decentralized school district may or may not involve parental participation in the decision making processes. Consequently, parental participation is not a necessary component for a decentralized school district. The term community control, however, refers to a redistribution of power to include parents in many of the major decisions which must be made in the operation of schools. Gittell (1969), describes it in the following manner:

> "Community control means that a new participant--the community, the parents of the children--become directly involved in the policy process that includes the selection of personnel (teachers and administrators), development of curriculum, preparation of budget (expense and capital), and formulation of major educational policy."

Although attending a community controlled school has been assumed to be beneficial for pupils, little empirical research has been done to quantify the effects of attending a school of this nature upon the social psychological development of the child, hence, the specific concern to which this paper has been addressed:

What are the effects of being in a community controlled school upon

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the internal versus external belief in the control reinforcements of the pupils: that is to say the children's belief that they are responsible for the consequences of their behavior.

The concept of internal-external belief in reinforcements is a major component of Rotter's (1954) Social Learning Theory. Simply stated an internal belief in reinforcements refers to a belief that reinforcements, or whatever happens to a person either positive or negative, is contingent upon his own behavior, and an external belief in reinforcements refers to a belief that reinforcements, again either positive or negative, are unrelated to one's behavior - that they are out of one's personal control, and that the reinforcements are, instead, determined by fate, luck, powerful others, or some other phenomena outside of the individual himself.

This construct has the potential to be of major educational significance, for if you reinforce a child in a positive (or negative) manner, it does not necessarily mean he will repeat the behavior (or not repeat it) to receive the same reinforcement (or similarly to avoid the same reinforcement). The repetition of the behavior instead is contingent upon whether or not the child perceives his actual behavior as the determiner of the reinforcement. In other words, did the child perceive the causal relationship between his behavior and the reinforcement or did he merely attribute the reinforcement to serendipity? Since reinforcement is seen by many educators as a powerful factor in the education of children, and there appears to be a relationship between reinforcement and locus of control, it is important that we become aware of the antecedents which contribute to the development of locus of control and the relationship of these to the total school setting.

Little research has been done in the area of antecedents to locus of

control but Rotter (1966) suggests that it is a generalized expectancy in adults that has resulted from a pattern of reinforcements.

Katkovsky, Crandall and Good (1967) attempted to discover what pattern of reinforcements lead to the development of which kind of locus of control. These researchers using subjects between the age of 6 years 10 mo. and 12 yrs. 5 mo. correlated an orally administered Intellectual Achievement Responsibility (IAR) scale to ratings of a home visitor observing the mothers behavioral interactions with her children. They found a correlation between a supportive warm praising environment and an internal orientation, and a correlation between dominance, rejection and criticism with an external orientation.

Davis and Phares (1969) also viewed parental interaction as an antecedent to locus of control utilizing a technique which required college students to describe interaction with their parents in retrospect. Although they found no significant relationship between parental locus of control and pupil locus of control they did find a relationship similar to the one reported in the above study, in that, pupils who were internal described their parents as having shown positive involvement and consistent discipline, whereas the students who were classified as external reported their parents to be more negative and rejecting.

Another very interesting study which was done by Gurin and Epps (1966) suggests that the teacher is also a potentially significant force in influencing the child. Using black college youths, they found that the students from lower income families were significantly influenced by non-family figures, particularly their high school teacher, to go to college. If students from lower income families are significantly affected by their high school teachers on this variable, it seems logical to ask the question how important then is the teacher as a model for elementary school children of lower income families?

The teacher perhaps is a more critical or as critical an antecedent to the development of locus of control than are the parents of these children.

The educational significance of these studies lies in the assumption that there is a relationship not only between parental behavior and reinforcement, but also between behavior and reinforcement of significant others of whom the teacher plays a major role. Both of these factors were important in this study because the parents could be seen attempting to influence what happened to their lives through their attempt to organize a school and exercise control in the policy making aspects of the administration, and because the teachers of the school were selected because they appeared to have ideas similar to those of the parents and consequently it was assumed these would influence the children from the Community School.

Many studies have also been done which relate ethnic group to locus of control and social class to locus of control, (Coleman, et al., 1966: Lefcourt and Ladwig, 1965: Battle and Rotter, 1964). Each suggests that when comparing blacks with whites, blacks are more external than are whites, and when comparing social class, the lower the socioeconomic group the more external. This study, however, attempts to control for both social class and race.

Another significant reason for looking at locus of control is that there appears to be a relationship between internal-external control to school success and achievement. Several studies have suggested this relationship to achievement. In one such study by McGhee and Crandall (1968) using students in both elementary and high school grades, an Intellectual Achievement Responsibility scale was administered to each child. The researchers then compared the IAR scores with course grade and achievement test scores. Their data indicated that students who were described as internal received both higher grades and higher achieve-

ment scores. They also found I-E to be a better predictor of course grades than the achievement test scores. They found sex differences with high achieving girls consistently more accepting of both success and failure situations while high achieving boys were more accepting of failure situations.

Bartel (1971) also obtained similar results using Bailer's Locus of Control scale with pupils in grades one, two, four, and six. She found pupils in the first two grades not significantly different in locus of control. This, however, related to a study by (Crandall 1965) which found locus of control to be measurable by 3rd grade but not earlier. Bartel, however, did find a significant relationship between internality and achievement in pupils in grades 4-6.

Crandall, Katkovsky, and Crandall, (1965) using a sample of 40 first, second and third graders also found a significant relationship between achievement and internality. They additionally reported sex differences with boys expressing responsibility for their own intellectual achievement during free play time.

Epps (1969) using a sample of high school students also found a significant relationship between internality measured by the Personal Control section of the Multidimensional Internal-External scale developed by Gurin et al. (1969) and the IAR and academic performance as measured by school grades and vocabulary tests.

Morrison (1966) again found similar results as the studies previously cited. She used the Children's Internal-External test which she developed by modifying Rotter's Adult I-E Scale so that children might be tested on this generalized concept. Her sample of 910 sixth graders, indicated that greater gains in achievement were made among children who had an internal

locus of control.

Another study by Hawken (1970) using a sample of 818 sixth grade students also found internality significantly related to achievement. Similarly, Nagler and Hoffman (1971) using the Children's Perceived Powerfulness Scale with 1200 suburban children in grades one through four, found that children described as high-powerful did better on achievement tests than did children regarded as low-powerful.

In summary, the study of I-E can be of use when attempting to understand certain learning situations which are effected by reinforcement.

This particular study was conducted in a large metropolitan city in the East. Two schools were included in the study; one was a community controlled school which was selected because it appeared to represent many of the qualities people describe when defining a Community School in that it was largely autonomous of the central school system, the parents had significant input regarding the curriculum, educational practices, and personnel selection, and the teachers and administrators were accountable directly to a policy board composed primarily of parents. The other school, which was a traditional school, was selected because it was similar in many respects to the Community School. Both schools had student populations that were 99 per cent Black. Both were located within the same general areas, in fact, their borders were contiguous and the socioeconomic status of the students were very similar.

The student sample consisted of pupils in both schools in grades four, five and six. There were a total of 185 students in the Community School that were tested and 177 pupils in the Traditional School which made a total of 362 pupils who were included in this study. Two measures were included

under the major hypothesis of difference in locus of control because they measured somewhat different qualities of the total construct. The Children's Internal vs. External scale, generally referred to as the CIE, measures a generalized locus of control and contains questions on many aspects of the child's life. The child is asked to respond to 26 forced choice items. Within each item an internal and an external response is included. For example:

a. (1) Most of the time children get the respect they deserve from others.

b. (2) Many times a child can try real hard and no one will pay attention to him.

Or another example is:

a. (1) Most of the time, I have found that what is going to happen will happen.

b. (2) I always try to plan ahead--I don't depend on luck.

The other instrument that was used in this study was the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility scale known as the IAR. This instrument measures locus of control specifically related to academic situations; examples of questions from this instrument are:

When you read a story and can't remember much of it, is it usually

A. because the story wasn't well written or

B. because you weren't interested in the story

Another example is:

When you learn something quickly in school, is it usually

A. because you paid close attention, or

B. because the teacher explained it clearly

Each item again contains both an internal and an external response but an interesting aspect of this particular instrument is that it records data for responsibility not only in success situations but also responsibilities for failure situations.

The data from both instruments were analyzed using a 2x3x2 analysis of variance (school by grade by sex). School was the only effect to be hypothesized, however sex and grade were also analyzed in order to make comparisons with the findings of other researchers in the area.

Table 1 gives the summary of the analysis of variance for the CIE. It indicates that the pupils in the Community School were significantly more internal ($p < .01$) than were the pupils in the Traditional School. Grade and sex differences were also found with girls being more internal than boys and sixth graders more internal than either the fourth or fifth graders.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

It is very interesting, however, in that on the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility test there were no significant differences found between the two schools. See Table 2. The pupils in both schools in this case scored

[Insert Table 2 about here]

internally and this seemed to indicate that perhaps the pupils in the Traditional School, were receiving somewhat dichotomous reinforcements. In academic situations they were receiving reinforcements which indicated that if you do your work and try hard you can succeed and if you don't do well it's your own fault. Whereas in generalized situations they appear to feel that they don't receive reinforcements related to their own efforts.

Although no significant differences were found between schools on the IAR, grade and sex differences were found to be significant. Sixth graders were more internal than either fourth or fifth graders and girls were more internal than boys. This relationship as has been previously mentioned also occurred on the CIE.

To summarize, the school differences on the generalized internal control measure suggest that the meaning of shared power and school atmosphere show up in more generalized feelings about exercising control in life. Specific control over academic success and failure was not found to be significant and may have had much more to do with specific teacher-student interactions that are not captured by the power structure or school atmosphere differences. It is suggested that the differences that have been found are probably the first set of distinctions that should be expected when community control occurs.

Future research in these two settings, especially where the same children could be followed from grade four through six, should help map the possible chain of changes that community control may spark in the children who attend schools where they share more influence and feel more positive about their teachers.

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TABLE 1

SUMMARY TABLE OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR THE CHILDREN'S INTERNAL VERSUS EXTERNAL TEST

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	P
School	1	87.86	87.86	11.14	< .01
Grade	2	150.31	75.15	9.53	< .01
Sex	1	106.23	106.23	13.47	< .01
Grade x School	2	35.28	17.64	2.24	-
Sex x School	1	4.31	4.31	-	-
Sex x Grade	2	19.12	9.56	1.21	-
Sex x Grade x School	2	30.16	15.08	1.91	-
Error	330	2,603.13	7.89	-	-
Total	1	459,798.13	459,798.13	58,288.94	-

F.05 (1,330) = 3.84 F.05 (2,330) = 3.00
F.01 (1,330) = 6.63 F.01 (2,330) = 4.61

TABLE 2

SUMMARY TABLE OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR THE TOTAL INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT RESPONSIBILITY SCORE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	P
School	1	1.32	1.32	-	-
Grade	2	177.75	88.86	10.04	< .01
Sex	1	56.67	56.67	6.40	< .05
Grade x School	2	2.95	1.48	-	-
Sex x School	1	0.22	0.22	-	-
Sex x Grade	2	75.16	37.58	4.24	.05
Sex x Grade x School	2	42.34	21.17	2.39	-
Error	270	2,391.25	8.86	-	-
Total	1	200,425.50	200,425.00	22,630.38	-

F.05 (1,270) = 3.84
F.01 (1,270) = 6.63

F.05 (2,270) = 3.00
F.01 (2,270) = 4.61